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My Chantless Friend

* * First Series * *

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Francis P. LeBuffe, S.J.

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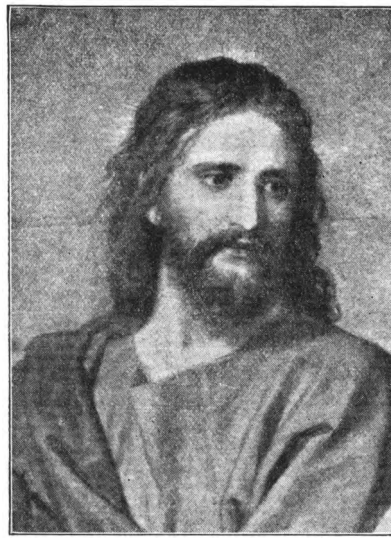
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MY CHANGELESS FRIEND.

"Coward, wayward and weak,
I change with the changing sky,
One day eager and brave
The next not caring to try.
But He never gives in and we two shall win,
Jesus and I."

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My Changeless Friend

First Series

Francis P. LeBuffe, S. J.

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Thirty-fifth Thousand

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To
Sainted Father and Mother
Now Changeless
With Their Changeless Friend

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PREFACE

NO mystery of faith finds so responsive a chord in our hearts as the miracle of the Blessed Sacrament, where "the man Christ Jesus" tarries still amongst us. To kneel in His presence and lay all the burdens of this exiled life at His feet is to bring Heaven very close to us. Time and pain cease, for we are lost in God. Yet some of us fail to show by our lives that we really value this gift. We would seem to have but a passing acquaintance with Christ our Lord, for we visit Him so seldom and speak with Him so formally. The object then of these little papers is to draw us more closely to our King, that He may in very truth be Emmanuel, "God with us," with us as our closest and most intimate Friend, the only Friend whose moods we do not have to watch.

They are but suggestive, and not exhaustive, meant to provoke our own thinking in the happy moments of our visits. If our Lord deigns to use them as channels of His graces, may the recipients of those high favors be mindful of the author in their prayers.

Woodstock College,
Our Lady's Nativity, 1915.

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I

Stay with us, because it is towards evening and the day is now far spent.

—*St. Luke xxiv, 29.*

CHILDHOOD is a strange, strange time. Its days are all golden and fairy-filled but as the sunbeams are gathered up from the earth and shadows fall, ugly forms lurk behind stone and tree and sullen hedge and childhood feels helpless then. So what do the timid children do? Need we ask the question? Are there not two whom God has given them, one by her strong love, the other by his gentle strength, who can and will protect the little ones from harm? To these they go and as darkness enfolds the quiet land, about mother and father the tots are gathered, and fear is a thing forgotten.

For most of us childhood days are long since gone; gone are its goblins and its thundering giants, gone its peopled darkness, gone perhaps, too, kind father and gentle mother. Yet though night has been robbed of its terror, there have come other darknesses into our lives, and, children as we yet are, we still know what it is to fear. Which of us has not felt the horror of unexpected trial when cross after cross fell upon our unschooled shoulders, and the bright sun of happy contentment sank speedily and surely

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from our lives? Which of us has not sat all darkened at heart and held up our hands in plaintive weakness for one to help us in our night of abandonment? Who has not knelt by the coffin of buried hopes swiftly cheated of fulfilment, and gazed out on a life that seemed to spell unbroken failure? Soul-darkness is terrifying and to be alone when that which is immortal within us is all afraid, oh, that would be unbearable! Our good God saw this. He saw "that it was not good for man to be alone," not good for this child of many years to face the dangers and perils of his darkened days alone, and in His infinite mercy He made him "a help like unto himself," and that help is " the one Mediator of God and man, the man Christ Jesus." The *man* Christ Jesus! Not an angel, not a being of a different order, but the man Christ Jesus. He is to stand by us when the light of peace and joy and consolation is snatched from our souls; to walk by our side when the night falls on our waning days, and the road is dark and our steps falter on the rough, hard way; to kneel by us when we are faint and weary and fearful of hidden foe, that He may speak to our frightened hearts, and nerve our strengthless arms, "to strike, to seek, to find and not to yield." He is to be to us Rabboni, Master. Yes, and more. He is to be to us in place of father and mother, and in these our

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days of latest childhood He draws us near to Him and sympathizes with us in our dark hour of trial and terror as only He can, who once on a time in the garden's shadowed walks "began to grow sorrowful, and to be sad," "to fear and to grow heavy," because of all the hideous sins of a whole world that fell full on Him. Oh, let us not forget "the man Christ Jesus" when most we need Him!

Stay with us, dear Lord Jesus, it is growing dusk. The twilight of oncoming desolation, of gathering sorrows, of rooted pain, from which the heart may wish us freed, of "dull and doomed regrets" is already upon us. Like little children we are afraid of the dark. Like little children we come to You. We do not ask that the chalice of Your sending be taken away, we do not even ask for light; we only ask for You to stay with us, only ask that we may hear Your voice over the sunless waters that reach into our very soul: "Be of good heart; it is I, fear ye not." Stay with us, Your fainthearted, timed children, dear Lord, until the mist is lifted and daylight has routed the distorted shadows of our soul's night.

"Strong and tender and true,
Crucified once for me,
I know He will never change
Whatever I do or be;
We shall finish the course and get home at last,
His child and He."

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II

Thou knowest that I love Thee.
—*St. John xxi, 17.*

THE formative principle of saints is personal love for Christ. Sense of duty may indeed lead us to salvation, but is it strong enough to lead us to perfection? Insistence on what we "ought" to do never yet kindled the fires of enthusiasm, and yet these fires must burn fiercely and devouringly in our hearts if we are to walk without stumbling and to light for others the homeward path of salvation. "Ought" is a harsh word, challenging liberty and repressive in its applications. When the Old Guard charged into the jaws of death at Waterloo, it was not duty that sinewed their veteran arms and nerved their hearts, but a mad devotion to a man, their leader. Nor has "ought" ever yet carried before it the barriers of Christian perfection. Love alone has been victorious. The massive chains of duty are far too weak to hold us in the way of God's higher service; only the tender threads of love, stronger than death itself, can keep us close to Christ, can bind us fast to His blessed counsels. We must fall desperately in love with Christ, for no other motive save a keen affection for Him as a real, sympathetic,

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human friend can keep us unfailingly in the paths of higher sanctity. To fail to check my unruly impulses, to neglect many a trifling duty of daily life, to be unmindful of a needy brother, to run away from the slight crosses our Lord may send, is not perhaps so very sinful. That I know. But I fail to keep tryst with Him who loves me, fail to prove myself His loyal friend, fail to spare that wounded Heart the pang of suffering once again betrayal by His friends.

Teach me, gentlest Master, teach me to feel each sin to be a personal slight to You. Let my life and all my actions be permeated and quickened with a great, strong love that knows not faintness nor weariness. Let each temptation to petty infidelity, to slothful lack of generosity be ever met by the thought of the pain it will give You, my best of friends, Jesus, my God, I will not forget my prayers. I will not speak the uncharitable word that hangs upon my lips, I will not shirk the burden that life may bring, I will not be slow when summoned to a new day's work, because this would be to wound Your loving Heart. Oh! You have suffered too much from the sons of men for me to add the slightest pain. "Grant that I may love Thee always and then do with me what Thou wilt."

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III

My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

—St. Luke i, 46, 47.

THERE is one surpassing good in our lives, and that is our Catholic Faith; from it all other good radiates; to it, as to its source, all else ascends. Yet are we ever, as we logically ought to be, consciously, wildly, almost uncontrollably glad of being Catholics? Does our Faith ever so grip us that our very being simply tingles with the vast joy of being in God's true Church, with a holy elation of humble superiority that we are of the true fold of the great "chief Shepherd"? Or does this stupendous grace always and unvaryingly remain an unnoticed, matter-of-course fact of our all too ordinary lives? Of all else we are glad—of riches, of health, of loved ones; we are glad of life, of life's passing, fading, shadowy realities. Are we ever madly happy in owning life's one reality? Is there ever a "Thank God!" that rushes forth immensely from our inmost being that we know God the Father, and God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, Three yet One, eternal, omniscient, omnipresent; that we have knelt beside the midnight crib and called an Infant of

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an hour's span our God, and stood beneath the midday darkened cross and adored the shattered Man of Sorrows? Mary, our Mother, we know, and all her gracious love these buried years, and are we glad, "real glad" of it, with the simple, untellable gladness of a child for Mother's presence? The saints of God are our victorious brethren and the angels of God our sentinels, whose eyes never close in sleep; the Holy Scriptures are the thoughtful letters from our own good Father, letters as really and truly from Him as the thin missive sent us from those we love this side the grave. And the great wide circle of the Church of God girdling the world, unyielding as the everlasting hills, it is ours, its feasts and festivals are ours, its holy images and sacred vessels, its tapers and its myriad gusts of song—and are we glad? Oh, yes, we trust we are at times so very grandly glad! But best of all, highest of all, as we kneel in silent adoration before our Eucharistic God, Jesus Christ, our Eldest Brother, still resident on earth, does a strong, big wave of happiness flood each nook and cranny of our being, that to us despite the black, ungrateful past, to us despite the sins high-heaped of years, our God's veiled presence is unveiled, shot through and through by Faith's unimpeded light? Does a fierce shudder ever run through us as we catch a glimpse of life's desert

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waste, were we orphaned of His sacred Presence? Think what a day that would be wherein we threaded our way amid the crowded streets and hurried along the quiet lanes and going into every church gazed up to every sanctuary lamp and found them all in darkness; and looked into every tabernacle and saw them emptied of their Treasure! Life would be chilled in our veins, life would be a cold, dead thing, life would not be worth its constant fight. Jesus would be gone!

My God, the vastness of it all! Whence all this wonderful goodness to us, Your faithless creatures, to me faithless among the faithless! Oh! the huge joy of it all—to be a Catholic! To be far withdrawn from the blind gropings of darkened infidelity and to be housed safe in Father's house; and greatest of joys, to meet there our own Brother, Jesus Christ, Thy Son, to know that He is ever "at home," to know that we may hasten along the still unlighted way before the break of morn, that we may brave the sun's high rays, that we may steal amid the lengthening shadows of eventide—and always find Him in His tabernacle-home! Oh! what happiness in God's own Home!

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IV

Lo! this is our God, we have waited for Him, and He will save us; this is the Lord, we have patiently waited for Him, we shall rejoice and be joyful in His salvation.

Isaias xxv, 9

WE are kneeling in holy expectation at the altar-rail. God's minister with gentle warning tarries a moment on the altar-step before he brings God unto His people and stirs our hearts with the words of John of old, "*Ecce Agnus Dei, ecce qui tollit peccata mundi*" "Lo! the lamb of God. Lo! He who taketh away the sins of the world." How our hearts tremble within us for we are about to welcome our King! Lo! this is our God, we have waited for Him. Since yesterday morn when last we knelt here, we have counted the tardy hours that would bring again this moment of happy union. "This is the Lord, we have patiently waited for Him." All during the day when the battle of life pressed hard, when the call of duty seemed all too imperative for our weakling souls, when the warp and woof of life seemed textured with darkest colors, "we have patiently waited for Him." With that thought was our heart buoyed up to hold our heart's own citadel against our foes,

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with that star that gilds our morning hour, the darksome path of hidden labor was brightly lit, and now we kneel once more and wait till Jesus comes. "Lo! the bridegroom cometh." " He will save us we shall rejoice and be joyful in His salvation." Life may have its sorrows that sting the shrinking heart, life may have its burdens that gall the wearied shoulders, but life has its King—and He is coming now.

Rabboni! Master mine, King and Master, God and Brother, You are to be mine as though no other soul possessed You. In the gray twilight of the morning, as of old You came to Magdalene, so now You come to me. You alone can win my heart. You alone can save my soul. Oh! what love to come to me to aid me in the warfare of this darkening world! Strengthen my arm, Lord Jesus, and make stout my heart, for the battle is hard and the way is long and my heart is weak. Lo! He is here—Jesus—my God and my All.

"Come to me, sweet Saviour,
Come to me and stay;
For I love Thee, Jesus,
More than I can say!"

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V

Soul of Christ, make a saint of me.

THE prayers of everyday life all but necessarily lose their native forcefulness and it is only at moments of special illumination that we are gripped once more by the strength of what we say. How bold these petitions—petitions that none but a God, almightly in love and all unlimited in power could fulfil! "Soul of Christ, make a saint of me!" Think of it—make a saint of me! We ask God to take this weakling will and to fibre it with the unyielding courage of the martyrs; to seize this sluggish heart and to quicken it with the terrific ambition of a Xavier. I ask Him to undo my pride that chafes hard at the slightest thwarting by instilling the sweet humility of a penitent Peter; to turn my harsh words and harsher thoughts into the gentle ways of the Apostle John. I ask Him to unravel the knotted skeins of a disordered life and to weave them into the pattern of His Sacred Heart. He is to take what is cold and sluggish and mean and low, what is earthly and debased, what is sensual and unchecked, and change it into the fiery, courageous, illimitably generous soul of a hero in His service. For

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this I must petition, not idly, not listlessly, not out of custom, but "with my whole heart and with my whole soul, with all my mind and with all my strength."

Can I ask any one but God to undertake such a task? Can any but omnipotent love find a way to accomplish what seems so hopeless? To the soul of Christ then we must fly for help. It is from the Blessed Sacrament we must gain our strength. With Jesus in our hearts the dross of sinful ways will be burned away; with the sweet whisper of His voice will come our hearkening unto grace, and then we shall become like unto Him, for we shall grow "in age and grace and wisdom before God and man." "Soul of Christ," attempt what seems so hard, attempt to "make a saint of me." "My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready!"

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VI

I found an altar also on which was written: To the unknown God.

—*Acts xvii, 23.*

AH! dear Lord Jesus, how truly these words may be applied to our own altars! These altars of our vast and glorious cathedrals, these altars of our numerous stately churches, these altars around which cluster the scanty cottages of the straggling village, are they not all built to "the unknown God"? You are not known, my Jesus; else how explain the ways of men?

Your justice is unknown, else man would not sin. Your mercy is unknown, else the despondent sinner would not tarry in his guilt. Your patience, Your kindness is not known, for if it were, would we play into the hands of the enemy by discouragement and irritation at our all too slight progress in perfection? Oh! we do not know You. You have been long with us, have tarried often in our hearts, and yet You are unknown. Your infinite love for us, Your infinite sympathy for us in all our trials is unknown, it so far surpasses all we can imagine. "Lord Jesus, make me know You," know the great desires of Your Sacred Heart, know the inspiring secrets of Your life, that I may follow

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You unto perfection. Make me know You in Your Blessed Sacrament so that my love for You may be a living, real love for a living, real person. Be not nineteen hundred years away from me, but be vividly, intimately, feelingly present for me behind the tabernacle door. And when You come into my heart at the hour of Holy Communion, be not unknown to me. Take away the incognito of Your sacramental Presence. Remove for my inward sense the veil that hides You from my earthly eyes and in the sweet lineaments of Your sacred Humanity speak unto me "as a friend would speak unto a friend." Then, Lord Jesus, I'll learn to make Your house my home, learn to come to You when the friction of mortal life wears deepest, learn to come to You and in Your sacred presence to enjoy a slight foretaste of the long bright day of enternity when I shall be safe at home with You.

For those "who find Thy saying hard"
And who this wondrous Gift discard,
Lord! let my faith atone!

But there's one soul whose want of love
Should most of all Thy pity move,—
My own.

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VII

Remember the Lord afar off and let Jerusalem come into your mind.

—Jeremias i, 51.

T was to the captive Jews exiled in hated Babylon that Jeremias sent his warning note. "You that have escaped the sword, come away, stand not still; remember the Lord afar off and let Jerusalem come into your mind." He bade them turn their faces to the west and gaze beyond the rivers of Babylon, where they sat and wept, on beyond the sandy stretches of the desert, over the hills of Galaad, on, on to Sion, "great mountain of His holiness," until they knelt once more in spirit within the Temple walls. "Afar off" they were to think of God and His holy place, and to lift their eyes to the mountains, whence help should come to them, for "behold He shall neither slumber nor sleep that keepeth Israel." One and all they were to do as their fellow-exile Daniel, who "went into his house and opening the windows in his upper chamber toward Jerusalem, knelt down three times a day and adored and gave thanks before his God."

Twenty-five long centuries roll by, the scene shifts and other exiles hear those words that

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echoed first across Euphrates' waters. Exiles we, too, must "remember the Lord afar off," and as we ply our daily tasks in simple daily ways in a land that is not our own we must think of home, we must "let Jerusalem come into our mind." Down in the hurried walks of business life, where greed for gain and lust for power cramp the soul of man and drag his heart away from the "land of the leal," the strong Catholic must "remember the Lord afar off," remember the prisoner-King, who while centuries rolled by has watched night and day amid the whirling cities of men to teach His own true knights that they were born for higher things, that the souls of men were not made to be dazzled by the glitter of purple or of gold. Hid away in her quiet home the tired mother, awearied with the work that is never done and wants of the children that ever seem endless, must "remember the Lord afar off," remember that the same good Jesus who is on our altar was once a little Child at Bethlehem, and needed His Blessed Mother's care; remember that it is unto His likeness that she must form her little ones and bring them to the fulness of His stature. When we are tempted to kick against the goad of colorless routine, when we are quick to hurl back the unkindly word, when prayer is quite distasteful and the higher life of the soul seems a barren, impassable desert, then we must "remember the Lord

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afar off." Afar off? No, not very far now, thank God; not over hills and valleys and widening streams, but, because of His mercy, only a bit of a way beyond our threshold, only down the street where Jesus Christ has made His home, a little apart from the crowded scenes of the busy world.

Jesus, my God, that I may remember You always; remember You in the early morning when a new day lies untarnished before me; remember You at the high noon, that You may pardon the lapses of the vanished hours and may speed the moments yet to come; remember You at the close of day, when the shadows fall, that You may guard our sleeping and wake us unto another day, be it the radiant day of Heaven or another twilight day in this valley of tears. Grant me, Lord Jesus, the grace to remember You when most I need You!

"We come to Thee, sweet Saviour,
And Thou wilt not ask us why;
We cannot live without Thee,
And still less without Thee die."

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VIII

May the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ be sentinel over my soul unto life everlasting.

—Cannon of the Mass.

SAVING Body of my King now really and truly dwelling within me, be sentinel over this wayward soul of mine unto life everlasting. My soul is all too unwary, all too prone to throw away its weapons of defense, to be able to fight the battle of life alone. Stand guard then, dear Jesus, over my heart and protect it from its enemies. When the smouldering fires of sensuality, of pride, of disobedience, of anger, begin to blaze anew and to show my crafty enemy where the weakness in my ramparts lies, call to my sleeping spirit and quicken it into action to stand and guard its own. When the lurking foe creeps upon me from without to crush me by the might of his embattled hosts, when he would tempt me to give up the hard conflict and join the rabble-rout of his doomed soldiery, stand guard then, Lord Jesus, and sound the alarm that will nerve my arms to do stout battle for the soul You died to save. Stand sentinel all during the busy morn of life when our spirits run high and we would fain like Peter and Thomas go with You to suffering and death.

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though we know not the pitiful weakness of our mortal frame. Stand sentinel when the glow and enthusiasm of the first call to Your service is but a faint echo amid the hills of memory and the dull routine of long campaigning, which has robbed the war of its zest, requires the strong, unflinching will of the veteran soldier. And oh! stand sentinel over us in "our failing years when our strength shall fade," when the call to battle will be the call to join the host of those who have "preceded us in the sign of faith and sleep in the sleep of peace." That will be our last stand; and may we die, Lord Jesus, beneath Your banner, fighting for the souls You have redeemed.

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IX

I will recount to Thee all my years in the bitterness of my soul.

—Isaias xxxviii, 15.

TO every one of us, no matter in how constant a swirl our lives may be tossed, there come moments when we sit and meditatively ponder the years that are lost to us and have been swallowed up in the past that knows no recall. With God at our sides, we tell the beads of our years, and ever are sorrowful mysteries the ones that color our thoughts. And it is good so to re-live the days that are gone, good, very good, "just and available to salvation," that we keep white the memory of days once ours, but ours no more; for it makes strongly for sanctification in the present. Life has swept by like the swallow on wing, and the ship, when every sail bellies in the gale, and perhaps, too, the furrow we have left among men was as short-lived as the wake of bird or vessel. "It is good for us to be here," good to see the days when we rejected God's strong grace and sped unthinkingly along the highways of infidelity; good to see the hours, when prayer was as a strange language to our lips, and God at best a far from familiar friend in a distant land; good

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to know the times and the places of our falls. The past makes us humble, and when we are humble then are we close to God. Our Lord sends us these moments of retrospection, not to engender melancholy and gloom in our souls, but to make us learn the world-old lesson of human frailty. Let us then make use of these precious times of enlightenment. Let them not be idle hours of vacant speculation of what might have been, but the starting points of new endeavors; let them lift us up to new planes of spiritual effort.

When we have recounted all our years in the bitterness of our hearts, let us take the crushing burden of sin and petty infidelity, and bring it all in its huge, black, ugly bulk before the altar of the Master we have offended. The weight will all but prostrate us, but bring it we must, right up to the tabernacle door, right up to where our sweet Saviour has "pitched His tent" among men, "ever living to make intercession for us." Then, when we have tottered there, and may perhaps feel hesitancy in knocking at our true Friend's home, we shall feel His gently outstretched Hand lifting from off our chafed shoulders the weight that no man can carry long. Then shall we realize that Christ our Lord has indeed stepped down from His path amid cherubim and seraphim, that our weary arms may rest upon His shoulders and our

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hearts grow stouter by knowing that He is at our side. Yes, He walks the hard paths of mortal life with us, for though we have sinned in the years and the months and the days and hours that have merged so swiftly and so noiselessly into His eternity, we are still His own, sheep of the great chief Shepherd, "bought with a great price," "with the precious Blood of Christ."

"Still, still, with Thee when purple morning breaketh,
When the bird waketh, and the shadows flee,
Fairer than morning, lovelier than the daylight,
Dawns the sweet consciousness, I am with Thee."

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X

And they both ran together, and that other disciple did outrun Peter and came first to the sepulchre.

—*St. John xx, 4.*

But Peter rising up ran to the sepulchre . . . and went away wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.

—*St. Luke xxiv, 12.*

LIKE St. Peter and St. John we, too, hurry each morning of our lives to the sepulchre, yet not like them to a sepulchre emptied of its dead treasure, but to the sepulchre of the tabernacle, the altar prison of our living God. Like St. Peter, we too, go away wondering in ourselves at that which has come to pass. It may be we have received Holy Communion and Christ our Lord has been true to His name "Emmanuel," for He has been "God-with-us" in a way that staggers our "thin minds that creep from thought to thought." He whom all space cannot contain has made His home within our breasts, and falling down we have adored Him. Then we go away wondering! If the Sacred Heart has opened out its riches to us and filled our poor, tired souls with sweetness

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and consolation, then we are wondering at the goodness of a God who stinted not in His gifts, at the power of a God, "who turned the rock into pools of water and the stony hill into fountains of waters." We go away wondering, too, when our hearts have been dry and our minds have fared far afield into the crowded markets of the world at a time when they should have been cloistered with their God. We wonder at the patience of Him who stands all the slights and rebuffs of our waywardness. Or, again, on a morning when prayer has been more or less colorless, when we have sounded neither the depths of desolation nor the heights of God-sent joy, when we have "just prayed as usual," then we are set wondering at the unwavering undiminishing love for our commonplace souls of a God to whom the music of the spheres is ever new, to whom the songs of Angels are always an oasis amid the dissonant jarrings of rational creation.

Again, we come to our Lord during the heat and press of the long day. Footsore and weary with pilgrimage of life, our minds dark with forebodings for those we love, and our hearts fearful for their good, we cast ourselves before our King, waiting for the "light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in our hearts," and lo! when we depart and slowly close the door behind us, we are "a-won-

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dering" whence it is that our spirits are so light, whence it is that the day is so bright and the music of the birds so sweet. "Surely," a faint voice tells us, "He hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows." "Our God is our refuge and strength; a helper in troubles which have found us exceedingly The Lord of armies is with us; the God of Jacob is our protector." "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God!" Who can fathom the mind of God, who from unbeginning days has been plotting to win the love of our wayward hearts?

O God, hidden from me behind the veil of apparent bread, my love can not equal Yours, and yet I must make return, I must offer some token of appreciation for all You have done and are doing for me. To show my love I will strive to be at least a little less negligent in visiting You, a little less distracted when I do visit You, a little less cold even in those few moments when I do successfully centre my wandering mind on You who hold me ever in Your thoughts. My God, I will strive to love You.

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XI

My days are at an end and they have rolled away from me like the shepherd's tent.

—Isaias xxxviii, 12.

WE stand at the turning of a New Year and though the spirit of the time is one of holy joy and exultation for those whose hearts are not moored fast to shores of time there is a strong current of sadness in these days. Another year is gone. With the silence of eternity, gathering in their host of weary pilgrims, the days and weeks and months have passed unto God. Our days have gone away from us, have rolled away like the tents of the Arab shepherds that at break of day vanish from the plain they had dotted the night before. "Children of a day, what are we and what are we not? Man is the dream of a shadow." Here today and gone tomorrow with scare a trace left after him, with none but the God who made him to take lasting note of what he does.

It were well then for me to put hand to stay the swift passage of time and to recount to my God "all my years in the bitterness of my soul," the days in which I prayed not, the

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hours in which my soul was degraded by clinging to creatures against the will of its Creator, the minutes in which I defied my God and trod the forbidden paths of deliberate transgression. Let me dwell long and thinkingly on those words of a Saint who tasted of worldy honor and worldly riches and unstable pleasure: "What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What shall I do for Christ?" The past and the present, my God, whether it be of fifty years or fifteen years, is summoned up so briefly yet so fearfully in that trinity of letters, sin. The days and weeks bear the stamp of wilful falls and wilful faithlessness to sworn resolves made at the feet of Your anointed minister. The duties of home, the obligations of business life, the colorless though pressing tasks of daily life have been neglected. Yes, Jesus Christ Himself has been neglected, for though from last Sylvester's day to this, true to His name Emmanuel He has dwelt amongst us, we have visited Him but rarely and even then we have been so little impressed by His presence that our thoughts swung back to the world without. It is a sad, sad retrospect and we hang our heads in shame, wondering with the saints, why brute matter itself has not risen up against one who treated its God so shamefully.

But the past is over and gone and Christ Jesus stands side by side with us to begin our

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New Year. "Fear not; it is I. Yes, strange, incomprehensible though it may seem, I am with you still though you have offended Me so often. Let bygones be bygones! All I ask of you is a future different from the past. Yes, even less than this. All I ask of you *now* is the strong will, the hearty resolve to rise with Me and to hold fast to My hand during the days and weeks and months of the coming year, lest you stray once more from My side. From out the crib before which you kneel these days I stretch My tiny hands, asking this one gift of you. Strange heart of man, to all others you will give a Christmas gift, will you refuse Me mine?"

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XII

Remember me and visit me.

—Jeremias xv, 15.

THESE words, meant to be the cry of man to God, may well be turned into the pleading of our sacramental God. "Child of man, remember Me and visit Me." It is the age-old cry for love from the intensely human Heart of Christ our Lord. As of old on the moon-lit slope of Olivet He tottered in His agony to the side of the Apostles, if haply He might find comfort in their sympathy, so now from out the tabernacle the Sacred Heart of Jesus pleads for a companion, pleads for one to come aside and break His isolation. When the dying thief looked over the tangled wreckage of his lawless days, his poor wild heart begged for remembrance and the Master of life and death heard his sharp cry. Now that same loving Master asks us to remember Him, yes, pleads for our poor company and the fitful love of our truant hearts.

The cry of a strong man is a woful, frightening thing to hear, and this is the cry of the strongest of men, the infinite appeal of the God-man. "Remember Me and visit Me." Can we refuse Him? If our nearest and dearest

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in the midst of pain and sorrow call for us and yearn to see us, does distance or expense keep us from their side? What now that God calls for our companionship! Today and every day the Prisoner of nineteen hundred years, pained by the sins of myriad faithless souls, saddened by the infidelity of those who should serve Him best, is waiting patiently, waiting expectantly for our footfall on the vacant pavement of His prison. Alone He watches, oh so often! "I am become like to a pelican of the wilderness: I have watched, and am become as a sparrow all alone on the housetop." "Remember these things, O Jacob, and Israel, for thou art My servant. I have formed thee, thou art My servant, Israel, forget me not." God is lonely—what a thought!—lonely and we, and none but we, have the stupendous privilege of visiting Him. Men and not Angels are the callers He desires.

Jesus, my God, how I have neglected You! How many a time I have heard but not hearkened to those words of Thine, "I am become a stranger to My brethren and I looked for one that would grieve together with Me, but there was none: and for one that would comfort Me and I found none." "I was in prison and you did not visit Me." Yes, You have been a stranger to me. So near and yet I have time upon time passed Your door and never stopped

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to speak a word to You to break the long monottony of Your solitary vigil. To other friends I have gone; but to You—! But this is the past, Lord Jesus, and pardon it in Your mercy. Forgive the many years of thoughtlessness and from this day on make my heart find its keenest pleasure in Your company. Lord, that I may love "the beauty of Your house and the place where Your glory dwelleth."

"Oh shame, Lord, for me to weary,
Weary of giving to Thee,
Whose Heart was but weary of waiting
To suffer and die for me."

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XIII

And I lifted up my eyes and saw, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand, and I said: "Whither goest thou?" And he said to me: "To measure Jerusalem and to see how great is the breadth thereof, and how great the length thereof."

—Zacharias ii, 1, 2.

SOMETIMES as we kneel in silent adoration after receiving our Lord into our hearts, we find our minds gently led back along the days that are gone, and we hear a quiet Voice reminding us of the varying way we have labored in the service of our best of friends. It is Jesus, the divine Achitect of our souls, measuring the breadth and the length of the spiritual temple we are rearing unto His Sacred Name. He comes not to scold us. No, this is not the time of scolding (and it is so very, very important to remember this when we are inclined to be worried spiritually), this is not the time for harsh rebukes. He may, indeed, chide us, but it will be the chiding of a tender mother, nerving, spurring us on to better, higher things.

He may show us how we have failed to meet Him each morning in prayer and thus have builded awry that day. He may point out our

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defects in faith and hope and charity and filial, whole-hearted confidence. The lives of those He has confided to our care, at the fireside, in the classroom or about the holy altar-rail, may have told Him of many a negligence on our part; and in His mercy He tells the dreadful secret to us, too. Perhaps the path of our days is tending more and more apart from the beaten ways of our fellow-men by reason of our selfishness in little things, and with a tenderness only those pierced Hands know, He unblinds our eyes, and lo! the meanness of it all stands baldly before us. And perhaps we are abashed, as we ought to be, and perhaps our hearts are timid, as they ought not to be, and then that same Voice breaks once again the stillness of our souls, and to our attendant angel we hear It say: "Take away the filthy garments from him," and to us, "Behold, I have taken away thy iniquity and have clothed thee with change of garments." Yes, in His love He wipes out the very sins He chides us for and gives us His strong grace, that the future may not be like to the past.

Jesus, great builder of my soul and all its wondrous faculties of nature and of grace, rear in my heart a temple worthy of Your blessed Name. An earthly temple needs many a blow before it stands forth in all its beauty, so, too, my very earthy soul needs many a blow from

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Your loving Hand before it can fit for Your spotless Kingdom. Yet sometimes, dear Lord, my hands grow tired, and I strike amiss; and sometimes the work is blurred and spoiled a bit; and sometimes my heart is timid and my will almost unstrung, for there are moments when the great work You have given me seems very hard. But my purposes are good, Lord Jesus, and so be patient, always patient as You have been. Bear with my mistakes in the future, as in the past, and some day, with Your strong help, the temple of my soul will stand without flaw or stain.

"And so, good Lord, I pray to Thee,
If e'er I give Thee pain,
Oh, let Thy Heart's humility
Come bring me back again."

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XIV

Destruction is thy own, O Israel; thy help is only in Me.

—Osee xiii, 9.

THE greatest sorrow in hell is the pain of loss and the keenest pang of that terrifying pain is the realization to souls that they are there through their own fault. If we are lost, we alone damned our souls, we alone thrust away from our eyes the light of Heaven and blinded them with the night of hell that knows no dawn. And even in this life, the prelude from which the harmony or discord of eternity is caught up, failure and destruction is all our own. It is we that grow faint in the hour when our will should do stout battle for Christ, whether in the privacy of our homes, in the crowded walks of business life, or in the tense atmosphere of the classroom, where the war for the souls of Christ's little ones is fought so lustily. It is we that forget our manhood when the angry word, the impatient rebuke escapes us at trying ways of our neighbor. It is we that forget our troth when the dear fires of friendship for Jesus, our King, flicker low in our hearts. It is we that have lost the vigor of spiritual youth when the self-restraint of

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Christian life irks us like an ill-fitting harness and we are sad. Thanks be to God, no mortal sin is there, but venial sin and petty faults and weak, unmanly selfishness. We feel no longer eager to meet our Friend, we yearn no more to kneel before His altar-home; for in our heart of hearts we know we cannot, with honest abandonment, clasp His hand or bear His gentle, reproving eye. And our hearts are sad; no joy, no sweetness in life now; and it is we, and not Christ, who have forgotten our love. He has met us often during the day, has asked little gifts of us, the gold of prayer, the frankincense of charity, the myrrh of mortification, and we had the heart to refuse Him. Oh, how bitter is life and how lonely we are!

Yet if we stifle the noises of the world and lay our ear to our heart, a faint, sweet voice calls to us with undoubtable love: "Destruction is thy own, O Israel." Sin and faithlessness to plighted troth and selfishness that would bring the blush to any cheek—these are thine own. In Me only is thy help. Return unto Me and I will not turn away My face from thee. Come, prodigal child, come to Me, the Man of Sorrows, burdened anew by thy offenses, but loving thee still. Come to Me and ease My broken Heart; "for I am holy and will not be angry forever." Rise, come!

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XV

How shall we sing the song of the Lord in a strange land?

—Psalms cxxxvi, 4.

THERE are times when we come to prayer and we wonder why it is our hearts are so unresponsive to God's good gifts at that sacred hour. Or perhaps we sit and listen to the word of God or read of Him and His saints, yet remain all unmoved. Our souls are quite out of harmony, and tune the chords of external help as we may, we awaken no response. And why? May it not be that in a way quite unlike the Jews of old, we "have sat by the waters of Babylon" in a land that is not our own, May it not be that the land of our hearts, the "kingdom within us" has become a land strange to the ways of God? How shall we sing the song of the Lord in a land that is strange? If father and mother have so hardened their hearts that they send their children to godless schools and maim their little souls, how can those hearts of theirs awaken to the song of angels or hymn sweet canticles of prayer to Him who is the child's best Friend? If man and woman have so far forgotten the sacred strains that wafted round their cradle

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that they rush without thinking after the rabble of a noisy world and fill their ears with the din of giddy, modern song, how can they hope to calm their souls and catch the heavenly prelude from which their song must begin? And those who are striving to lead a more godly life amid the shadows of this vale of tears—if they dull the cheering voice of grace within them, if they grow lax and tepid in hearkening to its high call, how can they sing the song of the Lord of which angels never tire?

To sing the song of the Lord is to have our hearts so attuned that they vibrate at grace's slightest touch. To sing the song of the Lord is to feel and to think and to speak and to act as Christ our Lord. But this song we cannot sing "in a strange land," in a heart wherein self is all too noisy, wherein the clamors of worldy pride and worldly ambitions make frequent discord, wherein the siren call of pleasure is too often hearkened to when the voice of God calls us elsewhere. We cannot expect to be in Heaven's choir and yet sing the songs of earth. Oh! how disappointing is this to Christ our Lord as He gazes out upon us from His tabernacle! Long is it since we entered His school, long is it since first we listened to His sacred counsels and yet our hearts are still "a strange land." Does not our angel guardian whisper to our souls: "Hath not this been done

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to thee because thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God at that time when He led thee by the way"? What a pain to Christ our Lord, to our best Friend, to know that our hearts are a land in which He is a stranger!

O dear Lord, again and again I come back to it, again and again I kneel before You, and confusion and shame is mine. Why is it, Lord Jesus, I treat You thus? Why is it that You of all my friends are made to feel my littlenesses? My heart is Yours by every right and yet at times I will not yield it to You. Pardon me, dear Lord, pardon and forgive me this pitiful waywardness of heart. And yet this is scarce an excuse for those who ought to love You, at least for all You have done for them. Yet, gentle Saviour, You know the wondrous weakness of our frame. Bear with us, bear with us a little longer, and then with nought of change as ages roll away, we shall sing the song of the Lord in a land that "hath no need of the sun nor of the moon to shine in it. For the glory of God hath enlightened it and the Lamb is the lamp thereof."

"No true and faithful lover I,
Yet Thy poor lover till I die."

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XVI

And Ethai answered the king, saying: As the Lord liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, in what place soever thou shalt be, my Lord, O king, either in death, or in life, there will thy servant be.

—II Kings xv, 21.

AS little children we were wont to "follow the lead," and over hill and down dell, through brush and briar, we frolicked, led on by the wild wind's will of childish pranks. Wherever the leader dared go, there went we, nothing daunted, lest we be dubbed "afraid." That was part of childhood's make-believe, but now we are grown into older years. Yet even as we are not other beings, but the same little rompers with a handful of added years, so, too, the playthings of yesterday have rounded off into the strong realities of man's full life. Today, as many moons ago, we "follow the lead," yet it is no longer the will-o'-wisp child-fancy, but Christ's soldiers' duty. Today we follow a divine lead, for we have knelt at God's altar, and by the holy oil of Confirmation we have been soldiered unto Christ. With young heart full and young will strong we have sworn the brave

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oath of God's Sacrament, and to our Captain, Christ, have cried: "Lord I will follow Thee wheresoever Thou leadest."

Christ took us at our word. It may be He has led us to Bethlehem and bade us be poor, as He was poor, to feel the want of life's least goods for those we love. Perhaps He has hurried our steps with His to Egypt, and we are far from home and those we love, meeting no friend save the one true Friend, to whose sacramental presence no corner of the world is stranger. Days of happiness have thrown their wholesome light along our way and we have sped our buoyant steps, not knowing weariness, for we have felt Christ's footprints beneath our own upon Thabor's gladsome slope. Then, as life's old story has it, full many a day we, too, have crossed the Tyropean Valley and gone out beyond the city walls and up the skull-shaped hill. The lead this time was hard and our pluck was all but strained, and may be, as we dragged our heavy cross behind us, we have stumbled forward, yet even as we tottered, we saw Christ's precious Blood still moist upon the earth, and our hearts grew stout again and our wills were fibred strong once more; for was not Christ our Lord before us still?

Yet sometimes, perhaps, as we trudged on from light to shade and back to light again, we forgot it all and took it that our way lay

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where chance had placed it. We forgot that we were "following the lead," and in our thoughtless moments we mismanaged our sorrows and misconstrued our joys. We thought trial a useless storm on the wilful face of cloud-heaped skies and happiness but an April sun that came and went with no law-giving hand behind it. We forgot that our gentle Leader had taken us at a plighted soldier's oath, we forgot that the play of the child was the life's work of the man. We forgot it, to our sorrow, and the bright days were fringed with life's pathos of foreseen brevity and the dark hours were more frightening still, for we were out in the night alone.

Ah, good Leader, Jesus, as God liveth and as the Lord my King liveth in what place soever Thou shalt be, my King, O Lord, either in death or in life, there shall Thy servant be. Thy soldier am I; Thine is to lead, mine to follow. Lead me on—that is all I ask—lead me on through life, O Lord Jesus, and I shall try to follow Thee; nay, rather, with Thy good grace I *will* follow thee; follow Thee when life's road is broad and smooth and sunny, follow Thee "amid the encircling gloom . . . o'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till the night is gone." I will follow Thee in Thy blessed lead until we meet the still, deep waters of death, and, as we plunge into its dark waves,

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like fearful swimmer, I shall rest my hands upon Thy stout shoulders and close my eyes, and when they open once again, the game of life will be over and I shall not have been "afraid,"—I have "followed the lead" unto the end. "Thou leadest, O God, all's well with Thy troopers that follow."

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XVII

Stay with us, because it is towards evening and the day is now far spent.

—St. Luke xxiv, 29.

EVENING is come and the troopers of Christ, the men and women, the girls and boys of every Catholic home, like valiant soldiers, kneel to salute their Captain before they pitch the tents to sleep. All day long the noise of battle has rolled and their souls are tired of the strife. Strong men have toiled away from home, shoulder to shoulder with a sinful, godless world. Frail women have tried hard during the lagging hours of a hidden life to make their home like unto Nazareth's and to bring up little ones even as Mary reared the little Christ. Young men and young women with arms yet new to the fight have struggled fearlessly to keep their soldier's robe of grace untarnished by the foul missiles which an abandoned society hurls daily at the clean of heart. Now, as darkness closes round the plain and the dead hush falls, all the goodly soldiers of Christ bend low and whatever may have been the fortunes of the day, they pledge once more a soldier's fealty.

And with them, the men-of-the-line in Christ's army, also kneel the great corps of His officers,

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holy priests and cloistered religious, who marshal in this valley of tears the hard-pressed legions of their unconquered God. With knightly hearts they draw near once more to where their Leader tabernacles in their midst and tell Him once again that they mean to lead His troops to victory.

Thus we kneel at eventide, but our ranks are thinned. Not all who heard the clarion call at morn are with us now, for many a fellow man-at-arms has fought this day his "last, dim, weird battle of the west." God rest their soldier-hearts!

O Jesus, our hearts are full, for the war is hard and short rest comes with the quiet of the night. Here, Lord, I kneel beneath the flickering rays of the tiny altar light and cast myself before You as a soldier bivouacing for the night. "Taps" has sounded, Christ my Captain, and on bended knee Your soldier, wearied with the warfare of the day, asks pardon of You for the many times he has failed since reveille. Lord Jesus, at times we have lowered our banner; at times we have failed to front our foes; but ah! thanks to You, we have never lost our flag, never suffered it to be trampled in the dust. And now evening is come. Tarry hard by us, dear Lord. Like the valiant general, guard Your sleeping host, "for the night cometh when no man can work." Guard us until another morrow

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lights us to new battle for Your sacred Name. Tarry with us, Lord!

"When the sun ascends each day—
When it sinks, and day is o'er—
Stay with me, good Jesus, stay,
Dwell with me forevermore."

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XVIII

While all things were in quiet silence, and the night was in the midst of her course, Thy almighty word leapt down from Heaven from Thy royal throne.

—*Wisdom xviii, 14, 15.*

IT was amid the audible silence of the Eastern night that Christ our King first came and pitched His tent in our midst. It was in the silence of the desert that He made His long retreat of forty days before His voice was lifted up throughout the length and breadth of the Chosen Land. Even when the multitudes, like famished sheep, sought Him in the day of His short-lived ministry and gave Him no time for repose and refreshment, it was the deep silence of the mountain-top at the noon of night that heard His prayer for men.

Sanctity and silence are inseparable. Silence of word, silence of action, silence of life is the one atmosphere where alone the image of Christ in our hearts is not tarnished and blackened by the vapors of this reeking world of sin. If we want to mould our hearts like unto the Heart of our King, and rear aloft a noble temple to His sacred Name, silence, complete and unbroken, must reign within us as it reigned of old when

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Solomon builded the temple unto the Most High God. Have we not noticed that God seems to withdraw from us when our lives are not silent? Have we not experienced only too often and to our spiritual loss that "the Lord is not in the wind . . . the Lord is not in the earthquake . . . the Lord is not in the fire"? Were we not closest to God "when deep silence held all things," when our tongues were bridled, when our actions bespoke no undue haste, when our life was detached from the noisy ways of men? Was it not when our souls were like some vast and silent cathedral, wherein no sound is heard, on whose threshold break and die the rumblings of a busy world, that the "almightly word" of God's grace "leaped down from Heaven," and thrilled our inmost being? When we are silent, then we are recollected, then only can we catch the delicate whispering of the Friend of our heart as He woos us to His love.

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XIX

Suffer the little ones to come unto Me.

—St. Mark x, 19.

OUR Lord, as is the way with friends, is wont to talk with us of those He loves. Often He tells of those great men and women who are now at home with Him amid the adoring Angels, loyal soldiers, when yet they tarried in this foreign land. Sometimes, too, He speaks to us of comrades in arms who need our prayers, as the fight goes hard with them and the crown of victory seems to fall from out their grasp. Again we hear His pleading Voice tell of the holy souls who tarry in the purging flames, souls perhaps of our own dear dead, souls all of them of His own dear dead.

Long years have we heard the Church's mournful cry, "Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord," and today as we kneel before Him, our Lord joins in that mournful plaint for souls and intercedes for those He loves. He reaches out to us helpless Hands, helpless because He willed to be dependent on our charity, because it is His good pleasure to be "Omnipotence in bonds." "Suffer the little ones to come unto me. They have spent their mortal days—and spent them well. Yet the dust and stain of struggling

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years are yet upon them and keep them from My presence. Souls redeemed by My precious Blood, souls for whom I died as no man died, souls whom I love, as only I can love, are kept from Me. My friends are held from Me—and 'there in hope the lone night-watches keep.' How I long to bring them home with Me, that where I am there also My little ones shall be! How I long to have My friends safe by My side forever! And you alone, My brethren, you alone can restore them to Me, you alone can unite Me to My own. Not Angels nor Saints now robed in glory can ransom them from 'the holy house of toll, the frontier penance-place.' Oh, man, powerful in your weakness, give back to your God the souls He made!"

Can we listen to that pleading of our Friend and not hearken to His cry? Can we go our unremembering way and forget "the prisoners of the King," to whose prison we alone hold the key? A little extra prayer as the hours of the day pass by, a little extra care to blunt our sharpened tongue, a little extra thought to soothe the cares of saddened hearts—and by such works we shall unlock the captive's cell and bring Christ's friends back to Him. "Before the mountains were made or the earth and the world was formed, from eternity to eternity" He has looked forward to that meeting. Shall we not hasten the coming of that joy? Shall

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we not do for God what we would do for an earthly friend?

Lover of souls, O Lord, I hearken to Your cry! Succor and aid will I bring to those You love; freedom and joy will I hurry to those dear souls, whose coming You so desire. Little can I do for You, few are the favors You ask. Surely this little will I do with all my heart. Never shall morning wear to evening but I shall think me of Your captive friends; think of them that their bonds may be loosed, pray for them "that all feet may come to the Everlasting Home." Then if one day, dear Lord, Your waiting be for me, may some one in that hour speed my coming to Your arms!

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XX

If I shall go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and take you to Myself; that where I am, you also may be.

—*St. John xiv, 3.*

THIS world seems quite a fair and happy place at times and for the moment our hearts think perhaps to have found their rest; but it is for only a moment, and then the illusion fades. For our joys are always fleeting and our sorrows are wont to linger, and even when they go, their shadows are long and they darken many a day. At best the world is a place of groping where tears fall fast and laughter's ring is quickly hushed. How can an immortal soul love a tarrying place like this? How can we help but feel a thrill of joy when we hear that it is not to be our home forever? Isn't it a cheering word that tells us that "there remaineth therefore a day of rest for the people of God"; that the shadows will one day pass away, that we but wait "until the day dawn and the day-star arise in our heart"? Surely it is right good news to hear that one day and that not far away "God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes, and death shall be no more nor mourning nor cry, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away."

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Even though we have Christ Jesus with us now, that can not make us content. He is with us—yes, and thanks be to God for that!—but He is hidden from our eyes. He is in disguise and when the day grows dark and our eyes are held, we find it hard to pierce behind the veil and catch the face of Him we love so much. Even Jesus Christ in disguise can not make this poor lodging of ours a lasting comfort. His nearness may nerve our hearts to bear the trials of our darkened pilgrimage; through His dwelling with us our exile may grow less hard; but it will never, nay for the very added reason of his concealment, it can never seem like home. Home is to be with God face to face; to see Him as He is, and not in the cloudy mirror of time; to be with Him with never the fear of separation there where "the man Christ Jesus" reigns as "the first fruits of them that sleep," where Mary is Queen and Mother, too, of all her ransomed children, whither some we have loved "have preceded us in the sign of faith" and keep an eternal Sabbath with the choiring angels. There is home! How our pilgrim hearts yearn to be there, yearn to have Christ come again and take us to Himself! "For, yet a little while and a very little while and He that is to come, will come and will not delay."

Jesus, elder Brother, how good You are! You saw the sorrows of our pilgrim days, the tear-

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stained eyes, the broken heart, the "arms outstretched with love of the farther shore," and You have lighted up the twilight of our tarrying. You have come and dwelt amongst us and oh! that makes it so much more like home—yes, but so much more that we yearn with greater longing to end our exiled days. You cheer the days away from Heaven, away from those we love and our best Father. But, Jesus, it is not home. That lies far beyond. It seems so very far. Yet You are with us now and You will guide us aright and some day, dear Jesus, You will lead Your exiles home.

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XXI

I have food to eat you know not.

—St. John iv 32.

OF old gathered about the buried altars of the catacombs, while famished beasts were made hungrier for their coming, the hunted children of a hunted Saviour fed their souls on the marrow of the "Lion of Juda," and Rome on her firm-set hills shook in wonder and dismay when these frail sons and daughters of Adam stood still against the shock of gnashing teeth and rending claws. Rome had never knelt with them in darkness around sunken altars in pit and caves and tunneled quarries, had never seen them eat of the Bread which was really God, and Rome, till then unconquered, grew afraid.

That was long ago, yet down the lapsing years the story of unknown courage has been retold, and now comes fresh again these latest days. "I have food to eat you know not," is the answer we, like our hero ancestors before us, hurl back to a world that can not understand the manner of our lives. Each child of God's own good Church is a giant in this world of pigmies, for "his strength is as the strength of ten, because his heart is pure," fed with the Bread of Angels.

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"I have food to eat you know not" is on the lips of sainted father and mother as they walk away with firm, sure step from the parting with the child they have given to God's high service. "God takes our child, but God gave that child to us, and God may have it, yes, may have them one and all, if so His blessed will demands." Those hearts may bleed, those eyes may redden with burning tears—for they are human—but there is no weakness, there is no repining. Their souls are fed unto unyielding power by a Food in the strength of which they have walked to the mountain of sacrifice.

At the same banquet of the early morning young men and women kneel to break their fast with the Bread of Life, to inebriate their souls with the wine that will keep them pure in the midst of a sinful world. By their side mere infants lift their tiny hands in loving expectation of the child's best Friend and, all day long, at school, at play, at home, Heaven seems to laugh from out those faces, kissed so visibly by the sunshine of God's grace.

Far withdrawn from the ways of men the cloistered leaders of God's army, summoned to council with their Captain before the dawn has broken the eastern night, receive the Body of the King of kings, and nerve their hearts to lead once more God's men-of-the-ranks against the ancient foe. Their lives men can not understand.

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Their self-forgetfulness, their self-control, their other-worldliness are puzzles to a world long deeply darkened by the night of sin.

The heroism of Catholic lives is one of the standing miracles God has deigned to give to a fallen world. Explain it you can not, unless you know the Blessed Sacrament, unless you know that love of God which brought Him and still brings Him to our altars. Catholicism is the biggest riddle of the world as long as the consecrated Host is merely bread to it.

"I have food to eat you know not," O world, and can not know, and that is why my heart is strong, That is why I can bear the smart of pain, the shock of shattered nerves, the agony of bruised and battered limbs, with a playful word upon my shrunken lips; that is why poverty has no sting and riches no siren call; that is why I can kneel beside the bed of dying loved ones, and with trembling fingers close their eyes in sleep that knowns no waking, and yet go back to life with the same old smile of joy; that is why, when Christ, my Captain, calls, I can leave the world and turn my back upon its fleeting baubles, and bind my life with triple vow to serve my King.

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